

Together We Define Tomorrow

Wisconsin NAMI Conference 2017

By Carol J. Slovachek

This year's State NAMI Conference unfolded in Madison with early opportunities to participate in advocacy and legislative concerns. I did not take the time to participate at this level but looking back perhaps we all should have been present at the state capitol. Our benefits and the benefits of many others are at serious risk of being taken away.

First of all, a well deserved congratulations to our own Kris Coen as the 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award. Thank you for your incredible contributions in creating and maintaining www.namikenosha.org. If you haven't seen our website you have been missing out! Our website rocks girl!!

A small group of us teamed up with Mettie Spies, keynote for Empowered Voices Save Lives to discuss our personal experiences with loss as the result of suicide. She shared her perspective as a survivor left behind in the wake of the suicides of both of her older brothers. We really came from all different perspectives as we explored our feelings about the losses of our friends, relatives, family members and friends. We agreed that our perspectives and feelings are as unique as our own experiences have been. Mettie was incredibly approachable and generous with her time. Watch for Mettie on her upcoming interview with the investigating TV show 20/20!! I would love to bring Mettie to speak to Kenosha in an open forum and she is eager to present to our community. This would be an incredible gift of education and enlightenment for our community that could ultimately save lives and compliment our Ending The Silence efforts.

The Workshops

Tobacco Stories: The Role Tobacco Plays In Our Lives

Maria Hansen continues to be front and center in both the advocacy and recovery movements. She did a great job of telling her story of her long battle and eventual victory over an addiction to chewing tobacco which she began at an early age and continued throughout her military career. Additionally she persevered to conquer her addictions to both drugs and alcohol. Her co-presenter, Bruce Christiansen helped to bring the discussion full circle with clinical insight and strategies used to help people break free from the use of tobacco. He also talked about different types of recovery programs and approaches. He emphasized that the key to recovery is to understand your triggers and to heal your past. People were able to share many stories about loved ones who lost their lives due to complications from using tobacco products.

Perhaps this presentation can open the door to exploring the impact of problem gambling in Wisconsin which is on a steady rise?

Police And Mental Health Collaboration Programs

Carlin Becker and Ryan Jennison are both Mental Health Liaison Officers. They are joined by Sarah Henrickson MSSW, LCSW of Journey Health to form a team that dedicates themselves to improving the outcomes between law enforcement and individuals struggling with mental health concerns in Dane County. These three dynamic individuals teamed up to talk about the changes in the approaches to handling people who live with mental health diagnoses in the community. As a team they work to get to personally know the various members of their Dane County that are at risk in an effort to intervene and assist them before they become a part of the corrections system. The goal of this group is to utilize the knowledge that they acquired in

CIT and essentially kick it up a notch. As a person experiencing a psychotic episode while apprehended by the Dane County Police in 2003, I was inspired by the efforts of these individuals and their dedication to strive for better methods of creating better outcomes.

Interestingly enough, the judiciary branch in Dane County has yet to add Mental Health Courts to their process but the many enforcement improvements are promising. Maybe we can share our judicial advancements and learn from their law enforcement advancements. It's all good!

Developing Crisis Intervention In Jails

This breakout was presented by Captain Richelle Anahalt of the Dane County Sheriff's office. She provided an enthusiastic and promising presentation on the many improvements going on in the correctional system in Dane County. There was also a discussion on past practices limited resources and the challenges associated with changing culture in the corrections system. Richelle is dedicating her life to improving the lives of those of us who get caught up in the system of not only in Dane County but in both other counties and states. Her goal is to make Dane County Corrections the model for future changes in the correctional system.

We had a great chat and exchanged information with the intention to revisit how corrections could benefit from a pilot CPS program. I also committed to making myself available to present to her staff about my experience in Dane County Jail in 2003 for a compare contrast piece. We are currently exploring how best to present my insights on my own personal experience in the Dane County Jail. PS.... Dane County runs a program similar in nature to CIT but more comprehensive in nature. Richelle mentioned that this training is open to any corrections personnel across the state on a limited basis. Let's send one of our progressive officers. **Captain Richelle J. Anhalt www.danesherriff.com**

The War Within: Veterans and PTSD

Well Luke is one of our own and we both live with PTSD. As a Certified Peer Specialist, I wanted to add this vital information to my continuing education. I got incredibly much more than I came for. Luke's presentation blew me away! It was both informative and visually captivating. I couldn't write notes fast enough; I couldn't stop asking questions. Unfortunately, I was not able to stay for the final visual piece because I was already somewhat overwhelmed. However, in the end I received an unexpected piece of healing regarding insights to my father's abusive and addictive nature. My father, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Edward Slovachek served in WWII as a navigator and bombardier. He served our country for over 30 years active and reserve combined as a proud American. Like the many soldiers that participated in WWII they were trained to fight and kill but they were never trained on how to return to society after witnessing the many atrocities of war. My father never made it to becoming a military pilot but in civilian life he filled that gap by securing his own private pilot's license with an instrumentation rating. He once told a close friend that while flying he felt close to God. Thank you both for the incredible sacrifices you made both preserving our nation and serving our country.

The Peer Recovery Movement: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Luann Simpson researched and created a fascinating historical piece on mental illness past and present. It brought to light the early beginnings of both the family and the peer movements as well as the rise of advocacy. The audience was presented with pictures of individuals from the early beginnings of the advocacy movement.. Luann queried the audience to see who recognized these pioneers or knew of their many sacrifices and contributions to the mental health field. Well of course most of us did not recognize the pioneers from the 1800's and early 1900s as expected. Then she followed with short biographies and linked them to current practices.

She also shed light on the many name changes to the various state mental health organizations over the years. Now I recognize why I never know who is working for whom and what they are doing in the grand scheme of things. The disturbing part was that too many of us could not name the individuals from our own generation who have fought so bravely to forward this movement!!

Thanks for doing this excellent piece of research Luann. We need to be mindful of the past so that we avoid repeating the same mistakes in the present. I wondered?? Are today's advocates for change and recovery like, Luann Simpson, Maria Hansen, Ava Martinez and Molly Cisco and many more already becoming a part of the forgotten Wisconsin movement to improve the lives of others? Hopefully our stories have still have validity our contributions will go on long after us to improve the many persons affected by mental illness.

That's a wrap!! I Hope you will attend in the spring of 2018 when NAMI Wisconsin will do it all over at the Osthoff Resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Thanks NAMI Wisconsin for another wonderful conference and congratulations to all of you who are both moving on and moving in!!

Additionally, a gracious thank you to the Kenosha NAMI Board for approving my scholarship and expenses for the 2017 conference!